

**Reform, the State Budget and Beyond**

By now the impact of the recent state budget revisions is reverberating throughout California. The painful results, and the flawed process leading up to them, underscore the need for broad reform. With the Legislature now back in session, I intend to do everything I can to advance reform of state budgeting, local government financing and the initiative process. I hope to help lead an effort to reorganize state government so it is more efficient, innovative, transparent and customer friendly. And I would like to experiment with ways to de-escalate undue partisanship.

Some of the impediments to a better budget are well-known: an anomalous 2/3 budget vote requirement that prevented enactment last month of an oil severance tax and increased tobacco taxes (which would have mitigated cuts to our kids' schools and health care programs); voter-approved initiatives that constrain our flexibility in a crisis; an antiquated tax code built for a previous century's economy; and a federal system that exacts much more revenue from California taxpayers than it returns in services.

Other hurdles are less widely discussed. For example, long-term thinking is essential, yet even our Constitution creates structures that discourage it. Over time the state has slowly assumed responsibility for services best controlled by local officials. The Legislature and Governor do little to set priorities annually, let alone organize government to address them.

Look for the Legislature to elevate reform of state government in the days ahead. I'll keep you apprised of our progress. But more than that, I would like to get you engaged in this process. From time to time I'll send around few ideas we're considering to get your feedback. And that's a two-way street: I hope you'll pass along your ideas for how to put California back on track, and I'll circulate those as well.

In the meantime, there are a couple lawsuits you should know about. In one, Senate President Darrell Steinberg is suing the Governor, alleging he had no power to make hundreds of millions of dollars in additional cuts to crucial programs for AIDS patients, kids' health care, state parks, senior services and other key items. (Legislative Counsel and other knowledgeable experts agree with Steinberg.) In the other case, former UCLA Chancellor Charles Young has sued to enjoin further enforcement of the 2/3 budget vote requirement. The outcome of these suits could have a profound impact on our state's future.

Assemblymember Mike Feuer
42nd District

Update on Legislation

The Governor just signed four of my bills, two of which I highlight here.

An Important Shield for Good Samaritans

In December the California Supreme Court ruled that California's Good Samaritan statute did not protect from lawsuits volunteers who provide non-medical help in emergencies. I immediately introduced AB 83 to shield all Good Samaritans from being sued if they act responsibly. Especially now, with public resources more scarce than ever, I wanted to encourage Californians to look out for each other without fear they might face litigation when they do. AB 83 garnered bipartisan support, and will take effect immediately.

I was moved to introduce AB 83 from personal experience. While driving home from work a few years ago on a Los Angeles freeway I witnessed the driver of a pickup truck swerve and lose control, overturning in traffic. I was able to help pull the driver and his family from the overturned vehicle while others blocked traffic on the busy freeway. I wrote this bill so that no one in a similar situation will have a reason to hesitate to intervene out of concern they could be sued.

Restoring Protections for Abused or Neglected Nursing Home Patients

Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs protect vulnerable residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities from abuse and neglect. Ombudsmen make unannounced visits and investigate thousands of abuse cases reported each year. Indeed, these Ombudsman programs are the front line of investigative services for often isolated and frail residents of long-term care facilities.

Last year the Governor vetoed roughly half the funding for these programs. As a result, local Ombudsman programs have laid off staff and drastically reduced services, putting patients at significantly greater risk of harm.

AB 392 immediately restores \$1.6 million for this crucial program. This funding comes from otherwise unused penalties paid by long-term care facilities that fail to comply with federal laws that protect residents.

Solving California's Water Crisis A Public Forum with the Metropolitan Water District

Last month I was pleased to participate in a public forum with the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) in North Hollywood focused on solving California's water crisis. I'm a member of the Assembly Water Working Group and this year authored pending legislation to reduce urban per capita water use in our state 20 percent by 2020. We discussed this and other ideas—including our urgent need to fix the fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region, from which Southern California received more than one-third of our water. Years of neglect have threatened the Delta's health, and a series of recent court decisions have set aside larger portions of water for endangered species of fish.

More than one hundred concerned citizens from throughout the district attended the event, many of whom want to continue to be involved in finding solutions. If you do, too, please let my office know. I'll report on the Legislature's progress on water issues in future editions of this newsletter.

Sherman Oaks Landmark Restaurant, Casa Vega, Named Small Business of the Year in 42nd Assembly District



In May I was pleased to honor Casa Vega as the 42nd District's Small Business of the Year. The award was presented to restaurant owner Rafael "Ray" Vega as part of the California Small Business Association's 2009 California Small Business Day in Sacramento.

Since its opening in 1956, Casa Vega has earned its place as a San Fernando Valley landmark serving authentic Vega family recipes in a friendly, festive atmosphere. Together with his daughter Christina and his cousin Rick, Ray Vega has managed the restaurant for over 50 successful years. "People come up and say, 'Thanks for being here,'" says Ray. "But it's the other way around; I should be thanking them."

Ray, his family, and the Casa Vega staff exemplify the small businesses that drive our economy, and bring joy to our community. In addition to providing hundreds of jobs and a friendly dining experience, Casa Vega has been a consistent supporter of civic events and institutions - including Chambers of Commerce, local schools, and public safety organizations. I know I am joined in honoring Ray by the countless people he has mentored, worked with, and most importantly, fed.

A Few Nice Awards



On September 15, I'll receive the 2009 Distinguished Leadership Award for an Elected Official by the California chapter of the American Planning Association. The APA selected me because of my work to improve transportation. You might recall that in my first term as an Assembly member, I authored legislation that enabled Measure R to be on the 2008 Los Angeles County ballot. Measure R then passed with an extraordinary two-thirds majority vote. Because of this effort, approximately \$40 billion will go toward traffic relief and transportation upgrades throughout the county over the next 30 years. These upgrades will include westward extension of the subway and adding north/south routing to the San Fernando Valley's Orange Line bus

way. I received this statewide recognition after receiving the 2009 Distinguished Leadership Award for an Elected Official by the Los Angeles section of the APA in June.

The California Congress of Seniors recognized me this week as a "2009 True Friend of Seniors" for my work on Assembly Bill 392. (That's the bill the Governor signed on August 6 to immediately restore \$1.6 million for local Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs over the next year.) Without the scrutiny of the Ombudsman programs, nursing home facilities are reviewed just once a year (or less) by government agency inspectors, so the passage of the bill is especially important for residents' quality of life and quality of care.

New Field Representative Joins District Staff

Haeyoung Kim, our new Field Representative, joined our district office in July 2009. As a westside native, she is thrilled to be in Los Angeles and working with the residents of the 42nd District. Ms. Kim is a recent graduate of the Master in Public Policy program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government where she was Co-Chair of the National Asian Pacific American Conference on Law & Public Policy and Senior Editor of the Asian American Policy Review. While completing her studies, she also worked with the office of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino to help devise a comprehensive municipal food policy strategy to increase the accessibility, affordability, and desirability of healthy foods in Boston.

Prior to graduate school, she worked as a researcher and policy analyst for nonprofit organizations in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., focusing on multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, international energy policies, and globalization. She has also interned with the U.S. House and Senate, on Capitol Hill and in district offices.

Ms. Kim's responsibilities will include providing constituent services to the residents of the 42nd Assembly District communities of Griffith Park, West Los Angeles, Bel Air, Holmby Hills, Beverly Glen, Westwood, Hollywood, Fairfax, Hancock Park, Los Feliz, and the Cities of Beverly Hills and West Hollywood. Ms. Kim is deeply committed to public service, and enthusiastic about getting to know the community and being a resource for the 42nd District. She is reachable at (310) 285-5490 or Haeyoung.Kim@asm.ca.gov.

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